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NOTES ON A
UNIQUE COPY OF A
RARE BOOK.



G. Vertue sculp.

ISAAC WATTS D.D.

Humilis colimus severioris

Printed for James Beatchstone at the Globe in Cornhill MDCCLXXIII

NOTES
ON A
Unique Copy
OF
DR. ISAAC WATTS'S
“Divine Songs,”

LATELY IN THE POSSESSION

OF

JAMES WARD,
NOTTINGHAM.



NOTTINGHAM :
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
AT “THE THOROTON PRESS.”
1902.

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J

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Illustrations.

Portrait of Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D., from an engraving by George Vertue, 1742. "Printed for James Brackstone at the Globe in Cornhill MDCCXLII."

Photograph of front cover of the copy of Watts's "Divine Songs," 1715, presented by the author to Miss Elizabeth Abney.

Facsimile of the title page of the copy of Watts's "Divine Songs," referred to herein.

Facsimile of Dr. Watts's autograph in the same book.

The above illustrations are the exact size of the originals.

Notes on a Unique Copy of a Rare Book.



S a book collector it has been my custom to call at the stalls of the second-hand booksellers in Nottingham Market Place every Wednesday and Saturday to see their books, and ascertain if they have purchased anything that would suit me. On the particular market-day on which I first saw The "DIVINE SONGS" of Isaac Watts, I said, as usual, to Mr. George Bryan, "Well, have you anything fresh this morning?" He answered, "Yes, I have this," at the same time pulling out of his pocket a small book wrapped in white tissue paper. I looked at it, and said "Yes, it is very nice, how much do you want for it?" He answered "Twenty-five pounds." "Oh, that is too much." Of course, I did not know the book, nor understand its value, and therefore left it. I called as usual again, and found that Mr. Bryan still had the book. He remarked, "It is a very rare book, and I am sure it is worth a lot of money." I left it that day, and on the following market-day I called again and found that Mr. Bryan still possessed the book. At the same time I happened to meet Mr. Henry T. Wake, of Fritchley, near Derby, a well-known antiquary and

dealer in curios. He said, "Have you seen the Watts' Hymns?" On answering in the affirmative, he said it was a very valuable book, and was also sure there was not a copy in the British Museum. I asked Mr. Wake if it was worth the sum Mr. Bryan asked. He said "Yes, I am sure it is valuable." I then asked Mr. Wake why *he* did not buy it. "Well," he said, "you know I cannot buy everything I see." I then went to Mr. Bryan, and said "Look here, Bryan, I will give you a cheque for twenty pounds, and ten pounds worth of books and pictures out of my collection which I do not want." "Very well," said Mr. Bryan, and so, on November 2nd, 1901, ended the transaction with him. At the same time Mr. Bryan informed me that he had purchased the volume from a lady near Mansfield, with several other books, for twenty-five shillings.

I then wrote to the Librarian of the British Museum, offering him the book for fifty pounds. In reply I was informed that the Trustees did not care to entertain the offer. Some months later I was arranging to dispose of a portion of my collection of Manuscripts at Messrs. Sothebys, in London, and decided to send the "DIVINE SONGS" up for sale at the same time.

In the meantime the news spread that I had found and secured a copy (which proved to be unique) of this rare little book. This may be gathered from the following extracts selected from various newspapers published throughout the country, many of the notices being merely copies from other papers, probably obtained through news-cutting agencies:—

"There has recently been purchased in the Nottingham Market-place a copy of that extremely rare book, the 'Divine Songs' of Isaac Watts, published in 1715. The first children's hymn book, afterwards enlarged and

re-named 'Divine and Moral Songs,' ran through a hundred editions before the middle of the century. The particular volume secured by Mr. James Ward has a history of its own, which much enhances its value. It was presented by Isaac Watts with his autograph and a special dedication (suggesting that the book in this respect is unique) to one of the Misses Abney, and is bound in full red morocco, with gilt edges and gilt tooling. Dr. Watts paid a visit to Sir Thomas and Lady Abney at Theobalds in 1712, which led to a proposal that he should reside permanently in their house, and his remaining days were spent under their roof, either at Theobalds or Stoke Newington, to which Lady Abney removed after the death of Sir Thomas in 1722. This copy of 'Divine Songs,' along with several other of Watts's works, have been sent up to Messrs. Sotheby and Co., London, to be sold during the spring. A copy of Watts's 'Hymns' recently fetched £146, and the British Museum is without a specimen of an earlier date than 1716. It will be interesting to see what this rare book will realise at auction. It changed hands in Nottingham at a figure only representing about a fifth of the price obtained for the last copy sold in London. Such is the romance of old book buying."—*The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, February 11th, 1902.

ISAAC WATTS, THOMAS GRAY, AND
OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"A few days ago in these columns there was recorded the find in the Nottingham Market-place of a copy of Isaac Watts' 'Divine Songs,' uniquely attractive by reason of his autograph inscription and dedication. In the dispersal under notice there occurs the *editio princeps* of the same author's 'Hymns and Spiritual

Songs,' 1707, whose several shaved headlines will militate against last season's price of £140. At least two other items belonging to the 18th century call for mention. In the spring of 1897 Messrs. Pickering bought for about two guineas a folio volume of Tracts, containing among other items, 'An Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard,' without place, printer's name, or date, on the subject of which Mr. Edmund Gosse contributed a long letter to the *Athenæum*. Mr. Gosse contends that we have here an extremely early piracy of the celebrated poem by Gray, probably struck off within a few days of the publication of the first 4to. We understand, however, that when the tract was submitted to the notice of the late Colonel Grant and of Mr. F. Jenkinson, the University librarian at Cambridge, they formed a different opinion. As is well known, Walpole handed round to friends several MS. copies of the 'Elegy' prior to publication, and it may be, that in this folio we have the poem set up provisionally by him when the manuscripts ran short. We believe that the watermarks of the paper are of a earlier date than the first edition of the 'Elegy'; besides, if this be a piracy, where are the other copies? Piracy only pays when numbers of examples are struck off, and this is the only one known to exist. If, indeed, it be the first appearance of the 'Elegy' in print, then it has great attraction. Of somewhat kindred interest is what is claimed to be a unique uncut quarto, on 16pp., entitled 'A Prospect of Society.' It consists of 310 lines, which form, so to say, the rough material out of which Goldsmith shaped 'The Traveller.' Apart altogether from questions of bibliography, we have here an excellent opportunity to study Goldsmith's method of workmanship."—*The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, February 20th, 1902.

"*Apropos* of the purchase by Mr. James Ward in the



Nottingham Market-place of a copy of a very early edition of Isaak Watts's 'Divine Songs,' 1715, I discover that, as with the 'Hymns and Spiritual Songs' of 1707, an example of which brought £140 at Sotheby's last year, the British Museum possesses no copy. The earliest edition in Bloomsbury, indeed, is the ninth, dated 1728. By way of supplementing the details which have already appeared in these columns, one or two incidents which give special attraction to Mr. Ward's copy, bearing an inscription to one of the Misses Abney, may be recalled. When on account of ill-health Watts was compelled to abandon his ministry in Bury-street, Sir Thomas Abney, once Lord Mayor of London, and Lady Abney, invited him to recruit for a week or two at their house, then surrounded by fields, at Stoke Newington. Three decades after he entered Abney House as a guest the Countess of Huntingdon happened to be there. The divine thus addressed her: 'This day thirty years I came hither to the house of my good friend Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend but one single week under his friendly roof, and I have extended my visit to the length of exactly thirty years.' Long ago the Abney mansion was swept away, and it is impossible now to enter the doctor's study at the top of the house, where so many of his literary and religious works were composed. Morning and evening he conducted prayers in the Abney household, and here he died on November 24th, 1748. The house survived almost a century, for it was in 1845 that it was pulled down, after having been used as a Wesleyan college, for purposes of the cemetery which bears its name. In this cemetery is a monument and statue of Watts, erected by public subscription in 1845, whose pedestal bears the prophecy from his own writings that—
Ages unborn will make his songs

The joy and labour of their tongues.

The monument is said to stand on the site of the house, and several of the old cedars and yews have flourished ever since his day."—"London Correspondence," *The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, February 22nd, 1902.

THREE LITERARY "FINDS."

WATTS' "DIVINE SONGS."

GRAY'S "ELEGY."

LODGE'S "ROSALYNDE."

"We have not yet reached the day, if ever it come, when knowledge shall be robbed of its attribute of power. It is a question of relativity, of course, for with the spread of education specialistic knowledge becomes more and more requisite. We often hear it deplored that the book or picture collector of to-day, for instance, cannot pick up a bargain; and it is true that Shakespeare quartos in good condition are not now to be found on bookstalls at a few shillings apiece, or that auctioneers' "parcels" frequently contain, as they did before cataloguing was a science, volumes perhaps worth their weight in gold. On the other hand, a complete set of 'The Constitutional and Public Ledger,' September 16th, 1836—July 1, 1837, was in 1899 bought for £1 8s. by a dealer who knew that the paper contained much Paris correspondence by Thackeray, not reprinted, and was later sold to an American collector for some £220. In other kinds, it is stated that the magnificent portrait by Hals which recently realised 3,600gs., changed hands some years ago at £20, and the late Mr. Loudon is said to have given but £25 for the pair of orange tubs of old Sèvres which fetched 1,050gs. A few weeks ago there was found in the

market-place of a Midland county town a 12mo. book which may be expected to yield a considerable profit to its possessor. This is the *editio princeps* of Isaac Watts' 'Divine Songs,' 1715, published probably at two or three shillings. Despite many metrical defects, much that does not come within the domain of song, this work—'a voluntary descent from the dignity of science,' in Johnson's words—ran through scores of editions before the middle of the century; and it is only necessary to cite instances like 'O God, our help in ages past,' 'There is a land of pure delight,' and 'When I survey the wondrous cross,' to prove the enduring appeal of Watts' hymns. The circumstances connected with the period at which it was first issued enhance the interest of the particular copy under notice. It will be recalled that Watts at the age of 24 preached his first sermon, he at this time being a tutor under the roof of Sir John and Lady Hartropp, at Stoke Newington. After a ten years' charge of Dr. Chauncey's congregation, which meantime had removed from Mark-lane to Bury-street, considerations of health compelled Watts to suspend his ministry. At Bury-street Sir Thomas and Lady Abney had become his devoted friends, and they invited him in 1812 [*sic*] to visit them for a few weeks' change and rest at Abney House, Stoke Newington. The issue may be told in the divine's own words to the Countess of Huntingdon: 'Madame, your Ladyship has come to see me on a very remarkable day. This day thirty years I came hither to the house of my good friend, Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend but one single week under his friendly roof, and I have extended my visit to the length of exactly thirty years'—an incident which recalls the first visit of a well-known living sculptor to a no less well-known living artist, which, intended to be of but a quarter of an hour's duration, was

extended till no omnibus or cab was procurable, over the night, past breakfast and lunch, au revoir being finally said twenty-four hours later. In the mid-nineteenth century, Abney House, whose old brick front was redolent of the time of William III. and Queen Anne, was swept away, and its site is now occupied by the cemetery of that name, where is a statue to the memory of Watts, a railed-off arbour where he is said to have written many of his songs and hymns, and some of the old yews and cedars which must have been in the grounds in his day. These memories give point to the fact that the copy of the 'Divine Songs' recently found was presented by the author to one of the Misses Abney—there is an autograph inscription and a special dedication. We understand that the volume will shortly be offered for sale at Sotheby's, although details as to this are not forthcoming. Apparently it is in modern morocco, which militates somewhat against its worth in the eyes of collectors. The earliest issue possessed by the British Museum is the ninth, of 1728, and it will be instructive to see how the price realised compares with the £140 paid last year for the editio princeps, in original calf, of the earlier "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," of which Peter Cunningham said in 1854 that it 'is rarer than the first edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, of which it is said only one copy is known.'"—*The Daily News*, February 22nd, 1902.

LAST BOOK SALES OF THE SEASON.

IMPORTANT LOCAL LOTS.

"The final book sale in Wellington Street, prior to the long autumn recess, takes place on the 28th inst. and two following days. The first 84 entries in the catalogue relate to books and MSS. belonging to Mr. James Ward, of Nottingham. There can be no question as to which

is the most important book in this series. In these columns at the time there was reported the purchase, in the Nottingham Market-place, of the perhaps unique first edition of Dr. Isaac Watts' 'Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children.' It was printed for Mr. Lawrence at the Angel in the Poultry, 1715, and the present example, in contemporary English red morocco, portrait by Vertue inserted, is of special interest by reason of the autograph inscription: 'To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, I.W.'—the work is dedicated to Mrs. Sarah, Mary, and Elizabeth Abney, between whom and the author a bond of deep friendship existed. An *editio princeps* of such a work, 'among the rarest and most valuable . . . to which genius has given existence,' has paramount attraction for the collector; moreover, the second issue, 1716, is known by but one copy, the earliest edition in the British Museum being the ninth of 1728. In December last Watts' 'Hymns and Spiritual Songs,' first edition, 1707, brought £140 at auction; and it will be of interest to observe what value is placed on the even rarer 'Divine Songs,' purchased, it is said, for about a fifth of that amount."—*The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, July 6th, 1902.

Miss Henrietta Shirley Sanderson, of Bath Vale, Mansfield, the lady from whom Mr. George Bryan had bought the books before mentioned, having seen the article in *The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, of February 11th, 1902, called on me at my place of business on South Parade on May 2nd, 1902.

In the course of conversation about the above books, Miss Sanderson mentioned that Mr. Bryan gave her twenty shillings for the "Divine Songs," and also informed me that she is the great-grand-daughter of Meredith Townsend (co-pastor with Dr. Isaac Watts, at

DIVINE
SONGS

Attempted in Easy Lan-
guage for the Use of
CHILDREN.

By I. WATTS.

*Out of the Mouth of Babes and
Sacklings thou hast perfected
Praise. Matt. xxi. 16.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for M. Lawrence at the Angel
in the Poultry. 1715.

Stoke Newington), and that she inherited the book from him. Miss Sanderson also stated that she had several other books which belonged to her great grandfather which she wished me to see. I said that I should be very pleased to purchase them. At the close of our brief interview I asked Miss Sanderson if she would accept, as a gift, a parcel of my publications, as I anticipated disposing of the "Divine Songs" on advantageous terms. She was pleased to do so, and a few days later, forwarded to me two more works by Isaac Watts, one of which I returned. The other volume I purchased, which is a duodecimo, bound in scarlet morocco, with a portrait of "Isaac Watts, D.D.," engraved by Trotter as the frontispiece. On the flyleaf of the book, which is in excellent condition, is written "Nov. 13th 1794 Given to Mary Townsend, by her Grandfather, in the Eightieth Year of his Age." The title reads:—"The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, And applied to the Christian State and Worship. [*Two Scriptural quotations.*] London: Printed for J. F. and C. Rivington, J. Buckland, T. Longman, T. Field, C. Dilly, and W. Goldsmith. M.DCC.LXXXIX."

On May 24th, 1902, Messrs. Sotheby wrote:—"Enclosed we have pleasure in sending you the manuscript Sale Catalogue of your Collection, we shall be glad if you will kindly peruse it and return it to us for press at your early convenience, after we receive it from you it will of course be arranged in alphabetical order. We showed the copy of Watts' Divine Songs to a Client and he would like to purchase it privately; if you would care to dispose of it in this manner and will name the price we will negotiate with him but we do not wish in any way to recommend this, we merely suggest it as we promised to do so."

On returning the manuscript Catalogue, I wrote to Messrs. Sotheby to the effect that Watts's "Divine Songs" should be, in my opinion, sold with the other books, as originally intended.

In reply I received a letter dated May 29th, 1902 :—

"We are in receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, returning the manuscript Catalogue to us. We note your queries and alterations, and will endeavour to follow them out. We are sure your decision as to the Watts is a correct one."

Early in July I received a few of the printed Catalogues of the forthcoming sale, and the following letter, dated July 4th :—

"You have no doubt received the catalogue of the sale containing your collections, the sale altogether is one of the most important that we shall have held during the whole Season and the catalogue was sent to America three weeks ago. We trust you are satisfied with the way we have compiled the catalogue of your property, and we think you will admit that we have done justice to the Watts,"

In a few days I wrote to Messrs. Sotheby expressing an opinion that I should suffer by the sale being so late in the season, as at the time fixed most people were leaving Town.

In reply I received the following letter, dated July 10th :—

"We are in receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. The Sale in which your books are included being one of unusual importance we are quite sure they will in no way suffer from being sold in July, instead of April, in fact London is quite full at the present time, and full of book buyers. We are glad you are satisfied with the Catalogue. It is very difficult to say how much the Watts may

realise, but we think we should not recommend you to part with it for less than from a hundred to a hundred and fifty pounds (£100 to £150)."

On the day of the sale, Monday, July 28th, my brother went up to London as my representative (this he has done on previous occasions), and as the book sales always commence at one o'clock, he arrived in good time, and found two gentlemen examining and making notes of the "Divine Songs." Very shortly after, the auctioneer ascended the rostrum, and the sale commenced with a copy of the Chapel Royal book of Anthems, bound in red morocco and elaborately tooled. After the first twenty-three lots had been quickly sold, there was a flutter of excitement on the production of the precious volume (lot 24) which for a great number of years had been most carefully preserved, and was now about to change hands, we trusted, to find a final resting place in one of our great British libraries. The volume is thus described in the catalogue:—

24 WATTS (ISAAC) DIVINE SONGS attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children, "Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou hast perfected Praise," Matt. xxi, 16, FIRST EDITION, *portrait by Vertue inserted, contemporary old English red morocco, Harleian tooled sides, gilt end papers, g.e well preserved printed for M. Lawrence at the Angel in the Poultry, 1715*

*. * UNIQUE, THE ONLY COPY KNOWN OF THIS MOST INTERESTING AND POPULAR LITTLE VOLUME. Of the early editions, the second published the following year 1716 (*only one solitary copy is known*), the earliest in the British Museum is that of ninth edition 1728, and of this only two or three copies are known. THE ABOVE IS A PRESENTATION COPY FROM THE AUTHOR WITH THE AUTOGRAPH INSCRIPTION as follows: "To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney I.W." The volume is dedicated to

Mrs. Sarah	} Abney.
Mrs. Mary and	
Mrs. Elizabeth	

A BEAUTIFUL COPY OF ONE OF THE RAREST BOOKS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. "No wonder, then, that we class the 'Divine Songs for Children' amongst the rarest and most valuable works to which genius has given existence. Children lisp his verses long before they can read them. We do indeed regard their author as one of the great benefactors of the human kind, and have searched in vain amongst the tomes of poets of far loftier pretensions for so many golden verses as are to be found in the 'Divine Songs for Children.'"

The auctioneer started the bidding at £50, which was quickly followed by bids of £51, £52, £53, £54, and £55. Then came bids of £100, £125, £135, £140, £150, and the book was finally knocked down for the sum of £155 to Messrs. J. Pearson & Co., Dealers in Rare Books and Autographs, of 5 Pall Mall Place, London, S.W.

On the afternoon of the Sale I received the following telegram from my brother :—

"Handed in at 369 Strand at 2.27 p.m., Received here at 2.45 p.m. Nottingham Jy 28 02. To Ward South Parade Nottingham Watts sold for one Hundred fifty five pounds sale Realised two hundred & thirty pounds."

For several days after the sale reports appeared in various newspapers, and friends in different parts of the country forwarded cuttings and marked papers. Some of these extracts are here reproduced as a permanent record of the interest excited by the sale of this unique book.

"A VALUABLE FIRST EDITION.

The unique edition of Isaac Watts's 'Divine Songs,' which Mr. James Ward so fortunately secured some months ago in the Nottingham Market-place, was sold yesterday at Sotheby's, fetching the large sum of £155. The copy, which bears date 1715, is one of the most notable little volumes which has come under the hammer

for some time, for of the second edition of the book, that which appeared in 1716, only a solitary copy is known to exist, and the earliest in the British Museum is that of the ninth edition (1728), of which only two or three copies are known. The book just sold possesses interest on other grounds. It is a presentation copy from the author, inscribed as follows:—‘To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney.—I.W.,’ and is dedicated to the Misses Sarah, Mary, and Elizabeth Abney, the family after which is named the Abney Park Cemetery, London, Sir Thomas Abney having been one of the Lord Mayors of the city. Mr. Ward obtained the volume in the Nottingham Market-place from the stall of Mr. Bryan, bookseller, of Park-street, Nottingham, the sum paid for it being £25, so that the transaction has been a profitable one for the enthusiastic local bibliophile, who has before now made many noteworthy ‘finds.’ It was purchased by Mr. Bryan from a lady who was a descendent of Mr. Townsend, the co-pastor at Stoke Newington of Isaac Watts.”—*The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, July 29th, 1902.

“Amongst the collection of rare books and old manuscripts belonging to Mr. James Ward, of South Parade, which were sold at Sotheby’s in London on Monday, was the only known existing copy of Dr. Isaac Watt’s ‘Divine Songs, Attempted in Easy Language for the use of Children.’ The book at auction fetched the large sum of £155. Quite a little story attaches to the small volume, which is dated 1715, and is personally dedicated to Mrs. Sarah, Mrs. Mary, and Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, who were daughters of Sir Thomas Abney, Lord Mayor of London. The book, it seems, was purchased by Mr. Ward from Mr. Bryan, bookseller, of Park-street, for £25, Mr. Bryan having himself given 25s. for what he recognised no doubt as a bargain. The volume was

To Mrs Elizabeth Abney

JW.

offered by Mr. Ward to the British Museum authorities for £50. They have a copy of the ninth (1728) edition, of which there are two or three other examples. The imprint of the book sold on Monday is 'Printed for M. Laurence at the Angel, in the Poultry.'—*The Nottingham Daily Express*, July 29th, 1902.

“THE SALE-ROOM.

On December 5, 1901, £140 was paid at auction for a copy of Isaac Watts's 'Hymns and Spiritual Songs,' 1707. A work by the same divine provoked even keener competition in Wellington Street to-day. Until Mr. James Ward bought in a Midland county Market-place—report says for about £30—the present example of 'Divine Songs, attempted in easy language for the use of children,' 'printed by Mr. Lawrence at the Angel in the Poultry, 1715,' the 1716 issue, of which again one copy only is known, was deemed to be the earliest. The volume is a presentation from the author, inscribed 'To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, I.W.,' one of the three dedicatees. It consists of 49pp., with a 2pp. table at the end, and the measurements are 5½in. by 3½in. The initial offer was of £50; then came one of £55; a third of £100; and Messrs. Pearson, of Pall Mall Place, were the buyers at £155."—*The Glasgow Herald*, July 29th, 1902.

"It seems certain that, whatever other copies of Dr. Isaac Watts's 'Divine Songs,' 1715, may be unearthed, that which lately realized the very high price of £155 at Messrs. Sotheby's will retain its unique character. It was not only a presentation copy, but was given by the author 'To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney,' who is one of the Mrs. Abneys to whom the little book is dedicated. A few weeks ago a Holborn bookseller had a copy of the same edition (although possibly not the example sold on Monday), which a well-known bibliophile saw and might have

have purchased for a shilling. Taking no interest in this class of books, he did not buy it. On looking over Sotheby's catalogue he came to the entry of Watts's 'Divine Songs' and then realized the opportunity he had missed. He lost no time in making his way to Holborn, but some one of a more speculative character had in the interval been there, and the precious little volume was gone!"—*The Athenæum*, August 2nd, 1902.

"An apparently authentic rumour has it that Mr. James Ward's copy of Watts's 'Divine Songs,' 1707, [sic] sold a few days ago at auction for £155, must abandon its claim to be unique. A second example was quite recently on offer in a Holborn bookshop for 1s. The gentleman who failed to buy it was actuated by no moral compunctions probably, for when he learned the value of the book he again sought it, but in vain. Even early 18th century books, known by single examples only, are apt, after all, to turn out other than unique."—"London Correspondence,"—*The Nottingham Daily Guardian*, August 4th, 1902.

"That there is no time like the present is a motto which collectors of rare and curious books might remember with advantage. A week or two ago a copy of dear old Isaac Watts's 'Divine Songs, attempted in easy language for the use of children,' came under the hammer, and was sold for £155. A contemporary said of him, 'How he wrote these hymns I know not,' but he would have been more at a loss to account for the phenomenal price at which they are now selling. Two things, however, ran up the price, one being that the copy (dated 1715) was the earliest known, and the other that it contained an autograph inscription, as follows: 'To Mrs. Elizabeth Abney.—I.W.' Mrs. Abney was one of the three ladies to whom the volume is dedicated. And now the story

is going round that a Holborn bookseller recently had a copy of the same edition on sale for a shilling, and that a well known book buyer passed it by with contempt. When the latter saw the 'Divine Songs' in the auctioneer's catalogue, he cursed his fate, hurried to the Holborn shop, and discovered in despair that the shilling treasure had vanished. There is danger in delay, even in book collecting. The late Mr. W. R. Hughes, who formed one of the finest Dickens libraries in the world, never trusted to the post. 'I wired for it,' he would say, when he had secured a particularly valuable treasure."—*The Sunday Chronicle*, August 10th, 1902.

As an apology for printing this brochure I should explain that during the past three years I have presented to my friends at Christmas a specially printed book. The thought therefore occurred to me to prepare one relating to the "Divine Songs," similar to the "The Recent History of a York Gradual," dated "Christmas, 1901."

Before sending the "Divine Songs" to London for sale, I thoughtlessly omitted to have photographs taken, and a collation made, of the book. However, I wrote to Messrs. Sotheby asking the permission of their client to privately print a pamphlet. They kindly interested themselves in the matter, as may be seen from the following letter, dated September 19th, 1902, which I received from Messrs. J. Pearson & Co. :—

"Messrs. Sotheby & Co. handed us a letter which we believe came from you in reference to a copy of the first edition of Watts' Divine Songs that we purchased in their rooms on behalf of a client. We forwarded the letter and accompanying pamphlet¹ to our customer, and

(¹) "The Recent History of a York Gradual," previously alluded to.

have just heard that he is willing to have a pamphlet on the subject compiled and printed as suggested. Will you therefore kindly communicate with us."

On receipt of this letter I wrote to Messrs. Pearson, asking if they would kindly obtain photographs of the binding and title-page, and also a collation of the book. They replied on September 26th, as follows:—

"Herewith we have the pleasure of enclosing photographs of the title, binding, and also leaf with autograph of Watts. Although you did not ask for the latter we think perhaps you may like to make a block from it, as it is really a dedication inscription to the lady for whom Watts had this copy specially bound.

The following is a full collation:—

A 10 ll. B to D2 in twelves, with portrait after Isaac Whood (a short notice of him is in the Dictionary of National Biography) engraved by George Vertue facing the title. In all 36 ll. *not* counting the portrait. Each leaf measures $5\frac{7}{8}$ in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The book is made up as follows:—Portrait, title, dedication to the Mrs. Sarah, Mary and Elizabeth Abney A2 to A8 recto, on the reverse of A8 commences the preface which goes on to A10 verso.

The 'Divine Songs' extend from B1 to D1, 49 pp. the Table occupying the reverse of D1 and obverse of D2, the last page being blank.

The dedication is dated from Theobalds, June 18, 1715.

Any other information you may require we will gladly give."

I afterwards received the following letter, dated October 2nd:—

"We omitted to tell you that the owner of the Watts' Divine Songs is the well-known Mr. J. Pierrepont

Morgan. No doubt you will mention this in your little work. Would you oblige us with an additional copy for ourselves."

Thus ends my story of the acquisition and disposal of a copy of Watts' "Divine Songs." The book not being one of the class I collect (I confine myself chiefly to collecting local history, etc.), I bought it entirely as a commercial speculation, and had not the slightest compunction in parting with it. Since the foregoing transactions my attention has been drawn to a most interesting illustrated article entitled "The Romance of Book Collecting," by the Editor of *The Connoisseur*, which appeared in *The London Magazine* for September, 1902. The article, which contains no reference to the "Divine Songs," and which can be commended to the notice of all who read my brief narrative, commences and terminates as follows:—

"Few people realise the number of delightful surprises that the book collector of to-day experiences. Nearly every one has heard of books being bought for a few pence which afterwards turned out to be worth hundreds of pounds, but it is generally supposed that such finds were all exhausted years ago, and that nowadays there is very little chance of finding valuable books on second-hand bookstalls or in old curiosity shops. Book collectors know better. Books worth more than their weight in gold are still being picked up in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, and romantic incidents are still leading to such discoveries. They may not be met with by every one, and sometimes an enthusiast hunts for years before lighting on anything worth securing, but in much searching after books the true bibliophile finds no weariness of the flesh, for he is cheered by the knowledge that of the finding of books there is no end.

In these pages I have been telling of some of the strange places and ways in which book collectors have recently made valuable discoveries. I have only mentioned a few exceptionally high prices. Those who like to read records may be interested to learn that a copy of the *Mentz Psalter*, sold to Mr. Pierpont Morgan cost the buyer about £5,000. A copy of Caxton's *Ryal Book* was sold last March for £2,225, and a copy of the first edition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was published in 1678 at eighteenpence, is now worth £1,475."

JAMES WARD.

*South Parade,
Nottingham,
Christmas, 1902.*





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